NORDIC WALKING WATFORD
Training for Chiltern 3 Peaks

Congratulations on signing up for the Chiltern 3 Peaks Challenge. Your participation and fundraising is very much appreciated by Rennie Grove Peace Hospice Care - and you will have a great time at the event!

I have put together some tips and advice to help you not only succeed at, but also enjoy the walk. Carefully planning your training, what to wear, what to take, first aid, food and drink, logistics etc, will all help to ensure you have an amazing, fun and safe day!

TRAINING

Training is critical for comfort and success for a long-distance walk. Your training should concentrate on building a base of walking, then increasing your mileage in a systematic way.

It's really important whilst you are training to simulate as much as you can of the event conditions – so try out your clothing, shoes, rucksack, poles etc, train with your team if you are entered as a team or get used to walking solo if you are going it alone.

To reduce your risk of training injuries, increase your total mileage per week or the distance of your longest walk per week by no more than 10-15 percent. This means for a long distance walk you will likely spend a few months training. By being methodical, you give your body time to build new muscle, blood supply, and endurance.

NORDIC WALKING WATFORD

Training for Chiltern 3 Peaks

Example Weekly Schedule for 18.5 mile challenge

- Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday: walk three miles. You can mix up the kind of walk you enjoy to build both speed and endurance on these walks.
- Monday, Wednesday, Friday: Days off. You can still enjoy a leisurely stroll or other exercises, but these aren't training days. If your event is a hilly one (it is!) , these are good days to include some squats, lunges and calf raises.
- Sunday: Mileage building day — long slow distance walk

Week	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.	Total Miles
1	5 miles	Off	3 miles	Off	3 miles	Off	3 miles	14
2	7 miles	Off	3 miles	Off	3 miles	Off	3 miles	16
3	9 miles	Off	3 miles	Off	3 miles	Off	3 miles	18
4	11 miles	Off	3 miles	Off	3 miles	Off	3 miles	20
5	13 miles	Off	3 miles	Off	3 miles	Off	3 miles	22
6	15 miles	Off	3 miles	Off	3 miles	Off	3 miles	24
7	12 miles	Off	3 miles	Off	3 miles	Off	3 miles	21
8	10 miles	Off	3 miles	Off	3 miles	Off	3 miles	19
9	2-4 miles	Off	2-4	Off	2-4	Off	Off	MEDAL

NORDIC WALKING WATFORD
Training for Chiltern 3 Peaks

You can vary the exact days of the week, but generally, you should take a day off between each walking day, take just an easy health walk or include some other exercise on the off day.

This schedule allows a steady build-up of mileage with less risk of injury and you can adapt the theme for the 7 and 10.5 mile routes.
Your longest training day should be three to four weeks before the marathon, then you begin to taper mileage.
In the final week before your event, walk 2-4 miles every other day so you will be fully refreshed and energized beforehand.

GEAR UP FOR A LONG WALK

All clothing, shoes, sunscreen, packs, etc. need to be road tested on your longer training days well in advance of the event.

NOW is the time to experiment - you want nothing that is new or untried at the event itself.

I can't stress enough - from head to toe, WEAR YOUR GEAR. Shoes/boots, socks, underwear, bra, shirt, pants, hat, jacket, rain gear. What feels comfortable on a 3 mile, 6 mile or even a 10 mile walk, can start to be really uncomfortable / annoying once you hit the longer distances.

You want to know how it will perform on the long walk and still have time to replace it if it doesn't. Then you need to walk with the replacement gear.

NORDIC WALKING WATFORD
Training for Chiltern 3 Peaks

Plan for the layers you will need given the climate and terrain. Choose wicking fabrics that will allow your skin to breathe and cool itself.

Choose your shoes or boots and wear them on your long training days to ensure they will work over long distance. Packs should be tested on your longer training days to ensure you can carry it comfortably over long distance and it has the capacity needed for food, water, first aid etc.

So your clothing choices are going to depend on the time of year you are planning your event.

Let's start at the bottom – literally … pants! Don't underestimate how much you need to be comfortable in this department. 18.5 miles in knickers that are uncomfortable is not fun.
Socks are so important – a good pair of boots become mediochre without an equally good pair of socks so go for ones that are designed for what you are doing, allow your feet to breathe and have padded heels and toes to avoid blisters.

Trousers! I walk most of the time in a good pair of walking trousers that have stretch. In winter a fleece lined pair are worth considering for extra warmth. Softshell trousers are good for winter, although hot for summer. Softshell is slightly rain resistant too so a great fabric for little showers. If you are opting for shorts in summer, do test them out and make sure you don't get too much chafing!

NORDIC WALKING WATFORD
Training for Chiltern 3 Peaks

In the colder seasons you need layers on top – a good thermal base layer, a softshell mid layer and then a water proof / wind proof outer layer.

For summer, a technical wicking T shirt (they make the world of difference compared to cotton) is best but if you are wearing a rucksack, do make sure your t shirt covers any bits of your body where the rucksack makes contact. And a light waterproof jacket is essential whatever the weather!

And a hat... a woolly hat in winter and a mesh baseball cap is great for summer walks to keep that sun off your head and out of your eyes.

Lastly shoes. The fit is so important when you are walking lots of miles and never walk a long distance in new boots. Build up the distance gradually. Make sure they are tried and tried and tried again.

You might like to opt for a shoe rather than boot for summer. You want to minimise the movement of your foot in you shoe as much as possible to avoid blisters and toe nail trauma. And also ensure the soles have adequate grip for the terrain you are going to be walking over.

So you have your kit – next up is NUTRITION!

NORDIC WALKING WATFORD
Training for Chiltern 3 Peaks

FOOD AND FLUIDS

Eating the right food at the time is critical in your success with endurance walking and the world of nutrition is constantly evolving. These days, proper fuelling isn't just reserved for elite athletes and being prepared doesn't simply mean sticking a bar of Kendal mint cake in your jacket pocket (although I do quite like Kendal Mint Cake!)

It's about what you can eat to perform better, recover faster and get the most out of your walking. But the booming sports nutrition industry offers such a bewildering range of advice that it is easy to get confused with what you should be eating and when.

The simple fact is that all exercise uses the body's stored energy, no matter what intensity. If these stores are not replaced, then over time energy will run low and performance will decline. As we know, the energy that foods contain is expressed in calories. Although every calorie provides the same amount of energy, the way in which the body breaks down a calorie from a carbohydrate, protein or fat differs vastly. That's why it's vital to consider different energy sources when fuelling for walks.

Fuel!

Carbohydrate is to exercise what petrol is to a car. It's the body's preferred energy source, as it's more readily converted to energy than fat. We have a small amount of carbohydrate circulating in the blood as glucose, with most stored in the muscles and liver as glycogen. This is very limited compared to the body's fat stores, which could theoretically provide enough energy to power a walker for 1,300kms.

NORDIC WALKING WATFORD
Training for Chiltern 3 Peaks

In simple terms, when glycogen stores deplete, your muscles and brain run out of fuel, making us feel exhausted and drained. The good news for hikers is that due to slower pace and lower overall heart rate, it is a lot longer before you hit that 'wall', since the body also uses fat stores alongside carbohydrate for energy.

Fat oxidation is not fast enough to provide energy during high intensity exercise but is fine for moderate walking speed.

Protein has a different role. There is no evidence that consuming protein during exercise improves performance, but since it takes longer to digest than carbohydrate, the advantage of eating protein on a walk is that it will keep you full for longer, as well as providing a savoury taste change to carbohydrate.
So, do we really need to worry about what we eat when out walking? It seems like the body looks after itself.

Unfortunately, this is not the case. Fuelling requirements when walking will differ greatly depending on factors such as length of walk, altitude, temperature and weight carried.

The type of carbohydrates that are needed will also differ at various stages of your walk.

NORDIC WALKING WATFORD
Training for Chiltern 3 Peaks

Carbohydrate-rich foods come in various forms, which can be classified by the Glycaemic Index (GI). This measures how much a food increases blood sugar level. Low GI foods that don't greatly boost blood sugar such as oats, seeded bread, pasta, yoghurt and some fruits offer a sustained release of energy over time. They are good to eat pre- hike or during a lunch stop, as they keep you fuller for longer.

However, there are times when your body may benefit from a quick release of energy through high GI foods, such as ripe bananas, a white bread jam sandwich, jelly babies or energy bars. These are perfect for energy 'on the go', when blood sugar levels have dropped and instant, easily absorbed energy is needed.

Hydration

As well as nutrition, hydration is vital to performance. If you don't drink enough, especially in hot conditions or at altitude, your performance will decline significantly. Severe dehydration can be dangerous, as it can mean you become confused and disorientated, so be aware of the early signs, such as headaches.

How much fluid you need depends on the duration of your walk, air temperature, altitude and how much you sweat. The key is to make sure you start your hike well-hydrated. If your urine is clear, you can be reassured that this is the case.

NORDIC WALKING WATFORD
Training for Chiltern 3 Peaks

When the weather is brutally hot and you are likely to sweat a lot, consider taking sports drinks or tabs to replace lost electrolytes. The balance of electrolytes in the body affects and regulates hydration as well as being important to nerve and muscle function. Electrolyte drinks containing sodium and potassium salts help to replenish the body's electrolytes.

There is no need to over drink, just be guided by your body and drink according to thirst. In hotter environments a more structured approach may be needed, such as drinking 100-250mls every 15 minutes, but the best advice is to stay vigilant and listen to your body.

Practical Tips

Before heading out on a walk, consider the following points, as these will dictate what food and drink you need to bring:

- Length & intensity of walk
- Conditions and weather
- Water is provided along the Chiltern 3 Peaks route but you will need to take your own snacks.
- How you will eat or drink (do you intend to stop for meals or take an 'on the go' grazing approach)?

Fuelling for short walks

- If walking for only a few hours, taking food isn't as important as longer walks. Ensure you have a hearty breakfast with a good balance of wholegrain carbs and
- protein. But do ensure you always take water, even during short walks, and drink regularly, especially in hot weather. If walking alone or in isolated places, be prepared for all eventualities and bring emergency food supplies just in case.

NORDIC WALKING WATFORD
Training for Chiltern 3 Peaks

Fuelling for long walks

For longer walks you will need a supply of 'on-the-go' snacks to keep energy levels up as well as something more substantial to have as a midday meal.

Again, a hearty breakfast is a great start to the trip. Aim to have a snack each hour and drink as your body dictates. If it is very hot, take a mouthful of fluid every 15 minutes (approx. 100-250mls). In cold weather, a vacuum flask containing a hot drink will not only keep you hydrated but will raise your spirits and your core temperature.

Pre-walk breakfast ideas

- Wholemeal bagel, banana and nut butter
- Poached eggs, avocado and wholemeal toast
- Porridge oats, dried fruit, flaked almonds and honey
- Natural yoghurt, homemade granola and fresh fruit

On the go snack ideas

- Energy bars
- Flapjacks
- Trail mix
- Dried fruit
- Jelly babies
- Malt loaf
- Beef jerky
- Crackers and cheese

NORDIC WALKING WATFORD
Training for Chiltern 3 Peaks

A balanced day hike lunch - choose one from each food group

Protein	Carbs	Fats
• Boiled eggs • Beef jerky • Canned fish • Peanut butter • Beans • Sliced meat • Seeds • Nuts	• Bread • Bagel • Oatcakes • Pasta • Couscous/other grains • Dried fruit • Boiled new potatoes • Breadsticks	• Olive oil • Butter • Mayonnaise • Avocado • Cream cheese

NORDIC WALKING WATFORD
Training for Chiltern 3 Peaks

Top Tips

- Train with the same food and snacks you will use during the event and get used to them. So, if you intend to use energy gels, make sure you have tried them first.
- Dried fruit is not great if you have a sensitive stomach so limit the quantities
- Keeping your blood sugar level constant is really key so eat little and often – on my longer events, I would eat something small every half an hour or so.

- The same with fluids and I would highly recommend a hydration system to take on board water little and often https://www.gooutdoors.co.uk/expert-advice/hydration- system-buying-guide

- After several hours walking the same food and water gets a bit boring. Go for loads of variety with your food choices and take an alternative drink too, just for a change.

- Try to build up your energy reserves before the event by carb loading up to 3 days before and start your event well hydrated too.

NORDIC WALKING WATFORD
Training for Chiltern 3 Peaks

REST BREAKS AND FRIST AID

The conventional wisdom, and one which I agree with, is that any breaks you take should be short—to use the bathroom, eat a snack and drink without choking, tie your shoes, or tend to blisters.

The body stiffens up pretty fast during breaks and it can take several minutes to get back into the swing of walking after a long break. Take walking breaks instead—keep walking but at a very slow pace.

Take care of your feet

Your feet are your most important equipment. On your long training days, you should have been experimenting with preparations, socks, etc. to prevent blisters. What works best is specific to the individual.

Try several of the seven strategies to prevent blisters, which include lubricants, wicking and/or double layered socks, moleskin, sports tape, Opsite or blister block pads over areas prone to blister. Along the walk, stop at the FIRST sign of hot spots (they don't get better without attention) and doctor your foot with tape, blister block bandages, etc.

Trim your nails before the event – or better still see a chiropodist a few weeks before. Toenails take a real pounding on these events and you might lose a couple or 5! You can try tape or silicon toe protectors which ease the pressure.

NORDIC WALKING WATFORD
Training for Chiltern 3 Peaks

Chafing
Sweat plus friction can leave you raw in all the wrong places - underarms, breasts, thighs, groin. Ensuring you train with or wearing all the kit you are doing the event in will help to highlight any potential problems. Vaseline will be your new best friend so make sure you take some in your first aid kit.

Muscle Pulls, Sprains, Pain Pain is the way your body signals you to stop - it is injured. Do not "work through" a new sharp pain during the event. You risk long recovery or permanent disability by walking further and injuring yourself more. Suck in your pride and signal the event officials for first aid and transport off the course. To self-treat until further assessment, use the RICE method - rest, ice, compression, elevation.

Dehydration Drink and eat before you are thirsty and hungry and keep doing so throughout the event. Sports drinks can provide replacement sodium and potassium to keep your body in balance on long distance events.

NORDIC WALKING WATFORD
Training for Chiltern 3 Peaks

First Aid Kit

- Blister Kit – well worth having and contain lots of bits you might need. Foil Blanket – great if you get cold quickly when you stop.
- Glucose tablets – for when you need instant energy Plasters and
- antiseptic cream – for any cuts or grazes etc Vaseline – cover
- those areas prone to chafing before you start and at regular
- intervals Antihistamine if you need Painkillers – headaches etc Kinesio tape – this is great for any slight muscle or joint niggles
- that can become big niggles after 30 miles! Practise using it
- before you go – YOUTUBE has some great videos. Sunblock – you
- really don't want to get sunburnt too... Talcum powder and spare socks – okay so medically not necessary but "oh so nice" when you change your sweaty socks for nice clean ones and dowse
- your tired feet in talc. Bliss! Well, as blissful as 18.5 miles can ever be really...
-

NORDIC WALKING WATFORD
Training for Chiltern 3 Peaks

HILLS

Let's talk about the elephant in the room... it's not called the Chiltern 3 Peaks for nothing! You need to be prepared for some ascents and descents.

As part of your training plan, include some strength exercises on your "rest" days - a combination of squats, lunges and calf raises will all help to build strength and enable you to power up and down the hills. Start with a circuit of 1 minute of each exercise building up slowly through the days and weeks.
Also make sure that your walks include some hills for you to train on. Whilst you want to take the hills slow and steady on the actual event, try to push yourself to go faster on your training sessions to improve your hill fitness

AND WHAT ABOUT POLES?

We use poles for walking for two main reasons:

- they help to take load off of the joints so you can usually walk for longer with poles than without
- Nordic Walking poles specifically can help to propel you along the flat sessions, distributing the effort over your legs AND arms so Nordic Walking will feel easier.

Your local Nordic Walking Instructor (ahem... that's me!) will be able to provide help and guidance on how best to use poles for any event you wish to do. It's important to learn the correct technique initially and your instructor will also be able to help with pole choice and adaptations for coping with hills. Poles are particularly beneficial on downhill sections and save too much strain on the knees.

NORDIC WALKING WATFORD
Training for Chiltern 3 Peaks

And there you have it – everything you need to know about preparing for the Chiltern 3 Peaks.

You were built for walking, but you need to plan and train fully before you tackle a long distance walk. If you steadily build your walking time, you can help avoid injury. If you are physically prepared for your walk, you will be able to enjoy and savour it.

And do you know what? You might wonder what on earth you are doing and you might say “never again”. But that feeling of defying expectations, of achieving your goal and crossing that finishing line is better than anything... and highly addictive!

Be confident in the work you did to prepare for the event.
Take a look back at your training to remind yourself that you've done everything possible to prepare.
The event is the fun part where you get to see the hard work pay off - enjoy it.

Desiree Linden

U.S. Olympic marathon star